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STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

Progress in the most critical areas addressed by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-seventh session

Report by the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report describes progress that has been made in relation to each of the 10 recommendations and 9 decisions made by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-seventh session (New York, 22 February-3 March 1993) on strengthening international statistical cooperation.

* E/CN.3/1994/1.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report describes the actions taken in response to the recommendations and decisions made by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-seventh session (New York, 22 February-3 March 1993) on strengthening international statistical cooperation. 1/ References are made to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Comments on the recommendations and decisions contained in the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its fifteenth session, work done and additional action required for implementation" (E/CN.3/1993/3 and Add.1), which is being made available for the present session; the note by the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening international statistical cooperation: other aspects of the Statistical Commission's recommendations and decisions on strengthening international statistical cooperation", which is contained in the annex to the present report; the report of the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its sixteenth session (Geneva, 13-16 September 1993) (E/CN.3/1994/2); and the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its twenty-seventh session (Geneva, 6-8 September 1993) (E/CN.3/1994/4). The Working Group, at the above-mentioned session, reviewed all the recommendations and decisions of the Commission on strengthening international statistical cooperation and concluded that it had reviewed progress in all the relevant areas (E/CN.3/1994/2, para. 68).

I. ACTIONS TAKEN IN RELATION TO EACH RECOMMENDATION AND DECISION

A. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2. The Commission broadly agreed that it should meet more frequently, if necessary. (Several representatives were concerned that such additional meetings, if needed for programmatic reasons, not give rise to additional costs.)

3. In relation to recommendation I, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly approved the holding of a special session of the Commission in 1994, in addition to the twenty-eighth session in 1995, as recommended by the Commission 2/ (see Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/6 and General Assembly resolution 48/222).

Recommendation 2

4. The Commission decided, with immediate effect:

(a) To nominate officers for the following session at the end of a current session, with formal election at the beginning of the following session, to re-elect the same persons a number of times as officers and to provide for the officers to meet informally;

(b) To request the Secretariat to give a copy of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council to new officers and to consider drafting a popular version of the rules incorporating practical hints;

(c) To request the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat to invite chairpersons of regional conferences of chief statisticians to participate in the sessions;

(d) To request participants to present their reports to the Commission as documents or background papers and not as lengthy oral statements;

(e) To request the Secretariat to ensure that specific agenda items were well prepared and well documented through discussions and reports of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and/or the Working Group.

5. In relation to recommendation 2 (a), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 7. However, the country composition of the Commission will be the same for both the special session in 1994 and the twenty-eighth session in 1995, so that any uncertainty on that account should be removed for the 1995 session; although it will still not necessarily be clear at the time of the 1994 session who the countries' representatives will be for the 1995 session.

6. In relation to recommendation 2 (b), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 8. The Statistical Division (UNSTAT) considers that the intent of that recommendation might be met by the preparation of a brief description of how the Statistical Commission conducts its sessions in practice. Such a description could be a useful tool, particularly for new members of the Commission, and could include information on how the agenda is established; the sources and forms of documents; the kinds of interventions that are made; and the process of electing officers.

7. In relation to recommendation 2 (c), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 9. Each regional commission is requested, at the appropriate time, to provide the name of the current Chairman of the regional conference of chief statisticians and invitations are sent out by the Statistical Division.

8. In relation to recommendation 2 (d), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 10. The Secretariat reminded all members of the Commission of that recommendation as part of the preparation for the session.

9. In relation to recommendation 2 (e), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 11. The recommendation process has been carried out for the present session: the reports of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities (E/CN.3/1994/4) and the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination (E/CN.3/1994/2) are major discussion documents for agenda items 3 (Strengthening international statistical cooperation); 4 (Implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (1993 SNA)); and 6 (Fundamental principles of official statistics).

Recommendation 3

10. The Commission decided with immediate effect:

(a) To recommend to the Economic and Social Council that the Working Group hold one session a year, of four days' duration;

(b) To determine the membership of the Working Group at the end of each session of the Commission and give preference to newly nominated officers for the next session;

(c) To request the Statistical Division to invite the chairpersons of the regional conferences of chief statisticians to participate in the sessions of the Working Group;

(d) To request the Working Group to prepare short reports on its sessions and to ensure that the sessions mainly result in specific documentation for the Commission.

11. In relation to recommendation 3 (a), the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly approved the holding of two sessions of the Working Group for four days each, one in 1994 and one in 1995, as recommended by the Statistical Commission 3/ (see Economic and Social Council decision 1993/224 and General Assembly resolution 48/231).

12. In relation to recommendation 3 (b), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 14, as well as the comments under recommendation 2 (a), paragraph 5 above.

13. In relation to recommendation 3 (c), the chairpersons of the regional conferences of chief statisticians were invited to the sixteenth session of the Working Group.

14. In relation to recommendation 3 (d), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 16. In addition, the Working Group adopted a more concise report that focuses on the conclusions of its sixteenth meeting and the report constitutes specific substantive documentation for several agenda items of the present session of the Commission (see para. 9 above). The paragraphs in that report relevant to each agenda item are specified in E/CN.3/1994/L.1.

Recommendation 4

15. The Commission decided with immediate effect:

(a) To request the Statistical Division and the agencies to place more emphasis on coordination matters;

(b) To request the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities to form ad hoc groups for special topics;

(c) To request the ACC Subcommittee to prepare specific documentation on appropriate issues for the Commission, through the Working Group;

(d) To request the ACC Subcommittee to ensure that reports on its meetings provided to the Commission were not lengthy.

16. In relation to recommendation 4 (a), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 18. Additional emphasis has been given to coordination matters by making use of existing coordination machinery, in particular by participating in the work of the inter-agency subject-specific task forces established by the Commission in decision 4 below (see paras. 46-50 below).

17. In relation to recommendation 4 (b), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 19. The Subcommittee has been fully supportive of the six task forces established by the Commission; it reviewed their work at its twenty-seventh session and agreed to the establishment of two new task forces (E/CN.3/1994/4, paras. 17-27). The Subcommittee also made decisions to improve its own functioning (E/CN.3/1994/4, paras. 7-14).

18. In relation to recommendation 4 (c), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 20. In addition, the report of the Subcommittee on its twenty-seventh session (E/CN.3/1994/4) has been included in the documentation before the Commission for the first time, at the request of the Working Group (E/CN.3/1994/2, paras. 39 and 49) (it has formerly been available in English only, as a background document). A summary of conclusions of the Subcommittee was made available to the Working Group. The Subcommittee decided to circulate the reports of its sessions to all Member States (E/CN.3/1994/4, para. 33).

19. In relation to recommendation 4 (d), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 21. In addition, the report of the Subcommittee on its twenty-seventh session has focused on the decisions and recommendations of the Subcommittee and the rationale underlying them, and is briefer and more concise than previous reports of the Subcommittee.

Recommendation 5

20. The Commission requested the Statistical Division:

(a) To find ways to strengthen its role in serving the purposes and work of the Commission;

(b) To place more emphasis on coordination matters.

21. In relation to recommendation 5, see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 23 and the annex to the present report, paragraphs 8-10. In addition, a senior professional staff member has been assigned to work full-time on the follow-up to the decisions and recommendations of the Statistical Commission on strengthening international statistical cooperation.

Recommendation 6

22. The Commission requested the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat, in cooperation with the statistical divisions of the regional commissions and other relevant agencies, to set up a system for monitoring adherence to adopted United Nations classifications, provide a description of the present situation on the adoption of classifications in the member countries and their relationship to adopted United Nations classifications, and submit a progress report to the Commission at its twenty-eighth session.

23. In relation to recommendation 6, see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 25 and the annex to the present report, paragraph 12. Proposals for a monitoring system are being prepared for consideration by the Subcommittee. Information on country practices in applying the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC, Rev. 3) will be included in documentation for the twenty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission.

Recommendation 7

24. The Commission requested the Working Group to consider the following as a possible special topic for discussion at the Commission's twenty-eighth session, in 1995: "Advantages and disadvantages of more flexible standards (classifications and other elements), concentrating in the first instance on classifications for economic activities and commodities (International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, revision 3; the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities, revised; and other classifications)".

25. In relation to recommendation 7, the Working Group decided to include the subject in the documentation for the twenty-eighth session of the Commission under the agenda item "Monitoring adherence to adopted United Nations classifications" (see E/CN.3/1994/2, para. 55).

Recommendation 8

26. The Commission requested the Statistical Division and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities to give continual attention to reducing duplication in collecting and processing data from member countries, and requested a progress report for each session of the Commission, along the lines of chapter I of the inventory of statistical data-collection activities (see E/CN.3/AC.1/1991/R.7); the report (and the inventory) should be reorganized along subject-matter lines.

27. In relation to recommendation 8, see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 29. The revised inventory of statistical data-collection activities was reorganized along subject-matter lines and issued (E/CN.3/AC.1/1993/R.6 and Add.1). The matter was discussed by the Subcommittee (E/CN.3/1994/4, paras. 15 and 16) and the Working Group (E/CN.3/1994/2, paras. 30-34). The revised inventory was circulated to all national statistical offices with an explanation of its objectives and those offices were requested to describe any specific uses they might make of the inventory (E/CN.3/1994/2, paras. 30-34, and E/CN.3/1994/4, paras. 15 and 16). Several replies have been received that reconfirm the usefulness of the inventory at the national level. A report on the coordination

of statistical data-collection activities has been prepared for the present session of the Commission (E/CN.3/1994/13).

Recommendation 9

28. The Commission decided that its role should include:

(a) Giving authoritative advice on the allocation of statistical subjects to the agencies concerning statistical work, development/revision of standards and technical assistance;

(b) Giving authoritative advice on the detailed agreements between the agencies on cooperation regarding the actual work to be performed.

29. In relation to recommendations 9 (a) and 9 (b), see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraphs 31 and 32. The reports therein referred to will be produced. The work programme of the Statistical Division, as approved by the Commission at its twenty-seventh session and containing the proposed adjustments in the allocation of resources in the Division, is being carried out. Cooperation has increased and proposals have been made for the realignment of some activities among some of the organizations (see annex, para. 11, and the report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics, E/CN.3/1994/7). The Commission will be informed of the outcome of the proposals.

Recommendation 10

30. The Statistical Commission:

(a) Endorsed the views of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination related to strengthening the role of the regional statistical divisions and conferences of chief statisticians in the activities of the Statistical Commission and within the global statistical community;

(b) Recommended that regional commissions establish or reinforce conferences of national chief statisticians, technically served by the respective statistical divisions;

(c) Recommended that the regional conference of chief statisticians, working in close collaboration with the Statistical Commission, act as the focus of regional statistical development. In that role they and the respective regional statistical divisions should be involved in developing, revising, testing and implementing standards and in monitoring their application, as well as in coordinating technical assistance;

(d) Recommended that regional commissions strengthen their statistical divisions to raise the profile of statistical work within each commission's programme of work;

(e) Requested specialized agencies, regional development banks and relevant United Nations bodies to cooperate to the fullest extent with the statistical divisions, especially in technical assistance projects;

(f) Requested the Statistical Division and the regional commissions, within the context of the Secretary-General's overall restructuring of the United Nations system, to determine the optimal division of effort between Headquarters and the regions.

31. In relation to recommendation 10, some actions taken are described in the annex to the present report, paragraph 5. An interdepartmental task force has been established at Headquarters, with the participation of the heads of the regional commissions, to review possible measures for strengthening the functions of the commissions, particularly by redeploying resources and decentralizing programme activities. As a result, the share of the resources under the regular programme of technical cooperation financed by the regular budget to be earmarked for activities undertaken by the regional commissions is to increase from approximately 40 to 60 per cent during the next biennium. The Commission will be informed orally of any resource changes that may have occurred in statistics at the time of the session.

32. At the invitation of the Working Group, a draft text has been developed, for consideration either by the Commission at the present session or by the Working Group at its seventeenth session, aimed at strengthening the role of the regional commissions, consistent with recommendation 10 above. 4/ The text is based on the Working Group's view that the mandate of the regional commissions in respect of their statistical activities should be specified in operational terms, including specific tasks, in order to enable them to play their appropriate role in strengthening international statistical coordination (E/CN.3/1994/2, paras. 18 and 19).

33. The Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, in cooperation with the regional commissions, has launched the United Nations Economic and Social Information System (UNESIS) to initiate a more effective use of the large and diverse body of economic and social information on which their work depends. The System is conceived as encompassing both the Department and the regional commissions, including their interrelations and the distribution of work among them in the areas of data collection, processing and dissemination. At present, the Department and the regional commissions have either collective custody of or access to most of the economic and social demographic data gathered, processed and analysed within the United Nations system. Improvements in the capabilities and practices of the Department and the regional commissions in collecting, organizing, processing, storing, sharing and disseminating economic and social data will enable both the Secretariat and Member States to have a more cost-effective and convenient access to the information needed for policy analysis and policy-making. It is expected that UNESIS will have a major impact on the work of UNSTAT, particularly with respect to subprogramme 2, "Applying advanced technology in collecting, processing and disseminating advanced statistics", and subprogramme 3, "Collecting, compiling and disseminating international statistics". By the same token, it is anticipated that UNSTAT will make major contributions to the development of UNESIS. To ensure close liaison with the regional commissions, a technical committee has been established consisting of the chiefs of statistics of the regional commissions and of the Department.

34. In the region of the Economic Commission for Africa, a Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD) and four subcommittees (on the organization and management of national statistical systems; training; data processing; and research, methods and standards) were established in 1992 to help realize the goals set out in the strategy for the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. The terms of reference of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers will be reviewed at the eighth session of the Conference, in March 1994, as part of the current efforts being made to revitalize African statistics.

35. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have introduced an integrated presentation of their statistical work programmes for the Conference of European Statisticians as a means of improving coordination. New formats for standardized project descriptions are being tried. The three organizations also hold annual joint programme review meetings for coordination purposes. A consolidated list of meetings is also produced and the meetings schedule is harmonized. ECE also sponsors some eight meetings per year jointly with OECD, Eurostat and others.

36. Until 1992, meetings of directors of statistics of the Americas had been organized alternatively in the region by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Recently, a broad agreement of collaboration between OAS and ECLAC has been established. As from 1994, the above-mentioned meetings will be held every two years in ECLAC headquarters and will be co-sponsored by both organizations.

37. Following a review of the conference structure in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Committee on Statistics was re-established. It held its eighth session in November 1992. The ESCAP Working Group of Statistical Experts, a de facto subsidiary body of the Committee, met in November 1993. The ESCAP secretariat, following up the recommendations of the Statistical Commission, prepared documentation for the Working Group on the role of the Committee, including documentation on enhancing that role. The Committee will meet again in November 1994.

38. A Statistical Committee has been established in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), with an initial meeting scheduled for 1995.

39. The ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities has encouraged its members to attend the regional conferences of statisticians (see E/CN.3/1994/4, para. 34).

B. Decisions

Decision 1

40. The Working Group decided that, for the twenty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission, in 1993, the Statistical Division should continue its informal practice of inviting chairpersons of regional conferences to attend Commission sessions.

41. In relation to decision 1, the chairpersons of the regional conferences of chief statisticians were invited to the present session.

Decision 2

42. The Working Group requested the Secretariat to develop proposals presenting several options to the Commission on how the Statistical Division might restructure its work programme to respond to those recommendations, including an indication of internal reallocations of resources that might be necessary.

43. In relation to decision 2, see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 36, and paragraph 21 above.

Decision 3

44. The Working Group requested that the Statistical Division and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities submit inter-agency planning reports on a subject basis, where feasible, to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session.

45. In relation to decision 3, see the annex to the present report, paragraphs 2-4, 6 and 7. In addition, for action on the proposed integrated plan for methodological work in statistics by the international organizations, see E/CN.3/1994/2, paragraph 24. For developments relating to the Directory of International Statistics, see E/CN.3/1994/4, paragraphs 29-32. For developments relating to the inventory of statistical data-collection activities (E/CN.3/AC.1/1993/R.6 and Add.1), see paragraph 27 above.

Decisions 4-7

46. The Working Group identified six subject areas where a need for review was considered a priority. The Working Group, having noted that task force mechanisms already existed for two of the areas, established new task forces for the other four and, with the agreement of the agencies concerned, appointed conveners for each of the task forces as follows:

1. National accounts (already existing; convener: Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts);

2. Industrial and construction statistics (convener: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development);

3. International trade statistics (already existing; convener: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade);

4. Finance statistics (convener: International Monetary Fund);

5. Price statistics including the International Comparison Programme (convener: Statistical Office of the European Communities);

6. Environment statistics (convener: Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat).

47. The Working Group requested the task forces to investigate ways to carry out the evaluations and to carry them out to the extent possible.

48. The Working Group requested the task forces to address the question of publications in the course of their reviews of the particular subject areas. In particular, the Working Group requested the task forces to consider the review undertaken by the Conference of European Statisticians, and set up a similar review. The Working Group specified that that review should primarily concern publications in printed or similar form, but the relationship with machine-readable forms of dissemination should be taken into account. The Working Group considered that it would be in a position to consider the matter further when it had received the task force reports.

49. The Working Group requested the task forces to carry out, in their particular subject areas, the two tasks described in paragraph 68 (a) and (b) of the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its fifteenth session (E/CN.3/1993/21), namely:

(a) On the basis of the (descriptive) integrated work programme of statistics and related documentation, an effort should be made to identify weaknesses, gaps and imbalances in the current programme. In such a process budgetary aspects should be taken into account;

(b) Besides the continuation of efforts to reduce the time lag between the observation period and the moment of dissemination of structural and detailed statistics, for some statistical subjects consider the possibility of collecting and disseminating more recent statistical information (main indicators).

50. For activities relating to the task forces, see the report of the Statistical Commission's Working Group (E/CN.3/1994/2, paras. 9-17); the report of the Subcommittee (E/CN.3/1994/4, paras. 17-27); the reports of the eight task forces (E/CN.3/1994/5-12); and E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraphs 44, 46 and 48-50.

Decision 8

51. The Working Group decided to bring to the attention of the Statistical Commission once again its concerns relating to technical cooperation.

52. In relation to decision 8, see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 52. In addition, special issues in technical cooperation in statistics have been included in the agenda of the present session.

Decision 9

53. The Working Group endorsed the ideas set out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/1992/R.3/Add.1) concerning the Statistical Division's plans for continuing to collect, compile and disseminate nationally reported data and to extend its adjustment and estimation work to all fields of its responsibility as far as possible, in order to meet the wide range of user needs. The Working Group decided that those plans should be brought to the attention of the specialized agencies for consideration.

54. In relation to decision 9, see E/CN.3/1993/3, paragraph 54. Specific work on estimates and adjustments is being done on an inter-agency basis in the field of international trade statistics (E/CN.3/1994/7).

II. ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

55. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Review the progress reported in this report and associated reports;

(b) Provide its views on the adequacy of the progress;

(c) Provide any additional direction it considers appropriate.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 6 (E/1993/26), paras. 30-49.

2/ Ibid., chap. IA, draft resolution II.

3/ Ibid., chap. IB, draft decision III.

4/ Ibid., para. 40.

Annex

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION: OTHER ASPECTS OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS ON STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

Note by the Secretary-General*

INTRODUCTION

1. At its twenty-seventh session, the Statistical Commission made wide-ranging recommendations and decisions for strengthening international statistical cooperation and development. a/ International organizations already have a number of initiatives under way, consistent with several of those recommendations and decisions, and are working on implementing them, particularly through the six task forces established by the Working Group (see E/CN.3/AC.1/1993/R.8). The present note provides a progress report on seven major areas identified by the Statistical Commission. Additional relevant work, accomplished through the Subcommittee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), will be reported orally to the Working Group.

I. INTEGRATED REPORTING ON THE STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES AND PLANS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

2. For the twenty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission, three reports completed by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat (UNSTAT), based on information provided by the international organizations, will be presented on an integrated subject-matter basis: two of the reports will cover past activities and future plans of the organizations and the third will cover technical cooperation activities. At the twenty-seventh session, reports on past activities and future plans were presented by subject-matter for the first time (see E/CN.3/1993/22 and 23). As requested by the Commission at that session, b/ for the twenty-eighth session these will be improved in terms of classification of subject-matter areas and coverage of organizations, as well as in other ways, as far as possible. The report on technical cooperation will be presented by subject for the first time, drawing on experience in presenting the reports on activities and plans. Details of the reports will be worked out by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and will draw on the experience of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in presenting integrated work programmes to the Conference of European Statisticians.

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* Originally issued as document E/CN.3/AC.1/1993/R.5.

3. Another integrated report - a plan for methodological work by the international organizations - was supported by the Working Group (see E/CN.3/1993/21, paras. 45-47) and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities. However, further specifications are required before the report can be prepared.

4. The inventory of statistical data-collection activities (E/CN.3/AC.1/1993/R.6), produced in June 1993, has also been organized in an integrated way according to subject-matter for the first time, in accordance with a recommendation of the Working Group.

II. ENHANCING THE REGIONAL DIMENSION IN INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK

5. As part of the restructuring process in the economic and social fields, the Secretariat is proceeding to review the extent of decentralization away from Headquarters in order to strengthen the role and increase the responsibilities of the regional commissions. For example, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis is initiating a more effective use of the large and diverse body of economic and social information that the Department, the regional commissions and others have custody over and access to. Economic and social information systems are being examined with a view to introducing substantive organizational and technological improvements, drawing on both the growing capabilities and expertise of the United Nations in telecommunications and information systems and external expertise in these areas. Meetings with the regional commissions to further develop this process are scheduled for July 1993.

III. UPDATING ELEMENTS OF THE DIRECTORY OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS AND REVISING THE CLASSIFICATION OF STATISTICAL SUBJECT AREAS

6. The 1994-1995 work programme of UNSTAT contains provisions for updating two parts of the Directory of International Statistics and issuing them as separate publications. It has not yet been decided which parts of the Directory will be updated but the matter will be discussed by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.

7. Experience is being gained in presenting statistical activities according to a classification of statistical subjects (the classification currently used is the ACC Programme Classification, which was developed with input from international organizations active in statistics and is similar to the classification used in the Directory; it has been used in the reports mentioned in paras. 2-4 above). That experience is expected to suggest ways in which the classification might be revised to better serve the purpose of reviewing international statistical activities and identifying gaps and overlaps. Recommendations based on experience to date will be made to the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities in 1994.

IV. EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF UNSTAT IN SERVICING THE PURPOSES AND WORK OF THE COMMISSION AND PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON COORDINATION MATTERS

8. For the 1994-1995 biennium, substantive priority has been given to coordinating support for the Statistical Commission and the Working Group, services to national statistical offices of Member States and coordination as requested by the Statistical Commission. c/ Although resources for 1994-1995 were initially reallocated from industrial statistics, the International Comparison Programme and human settlements statistics in order to permit additional support to be provided in these new priority areas, a new overall reduction in posts (three Professional and three support staff) has nullified the gains that were expected from the initial reallocations and further redeployment will be required in order to sustain the new priorities and other high-priority work, including environment statistics. Consequently, implementing the priorities that have been set remains a challenge.

9. To meet that challenge as fully as possible, senior staff of UNSTAT are devoting larger amounts of time to coordination issues in substantive areas, such as providing support for the task forces and preparing coordination-focused reports for the Commission, the Working Group and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.

10. Other approaches include continuing to use the instruments of inter-secretariat working groups in individual fields and maintaining ongoing consultations and exchange of information and plans, as well as holding ad hoc consultations and meetings on subjects and issues of current concern.

V. NEWLY EMERGING ARRANGEMENTS AMONG THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

11. New arrangements are being actively explored for the collection and sharing of data on international trade, industrial statistics and migration statistics. For trade statistics, technical work is under way involving UNSTAT, the International Monetary Fund, OECD and Eurostat in a test of the feasibility of changing collection arrangements to reduce reporting burdens on countries and ensure consistency of various sets of data maintained by the organizations. For industrial statistics, possibilities are being explored among UNSTAT, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and OECD. For migration statistics, ECE, UNSTAT and Eurostat are to review arrangements.

VI. A SYSTEM FOR MONITORING ADHERENCE IN COUNTRIES TO ADOPTED UNITED NATIONS CLASSIFICATIONS

12. A number of studies have been conducted to monitor the application in countries of internationally recommended classifications (Standard International Trade Classification, International Standard Industrial Classification, Provisional Central Product Classification and recommended concepts and definitions (international trade)). UNSTAT will develop proposals for a more

systematic approach and circulate them to the regional commissions and other organizations for comments.

VII. COORDINATION OF THE STATISTICAL DATA-COLLECTION ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

13. Progress in this area is discussed in detail in the note by the Secretary-General on the inventory of statistical data-collection activities (E/CN.3/AC.1/1993/R.6).

VIII. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

14. The Working Group may wish to provide additional directions and advice on these seven aspects of strengthening international statistical cooperation.

Notes

a/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 6, chap. II.

b/ Ibid., para. 216.

c/ Ibid., para. 228 (b).